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EARLY WARNING OF ARMED CONFLICT BY THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL: ARTICLE 99 REVISITED

-Draft Paper-

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Early Warning of Armed Conflict by the UN Secretary-General: Article 99 Revisited

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Abstract

The only independent political role that is explicitly given to the UN Secretary-General in the UN Charter is that of warning. (Under Article 99, he/she may warn the Security Council about any matter which may threaten the peace.) But is warning, especially early warning, by the UN Secretary-General likely, or even possible? By digging into the mines of UN history, I have sought to identify instances of early (and late) warning. For over 100 conflicts in which the Secretary-General intervened, only a very few (e.g., East Pakistan/Bangladesh 1971, Macedonia 1992) can be classified as early warning. There have been three explicit invocations of Article 99 in the Security Council (Congo 1960, Iran 1979 and Lebanon 1989) and about a dozen implied invocations, but most of these were late warnings or statements of support for warnings already provided by a member state. Given that there was no early warning in most cases (e.g., Korea 1950, Falklands/Malvinas 1982, Yugoslavia 1992, Rwanda 1994), one might rightfully ask why such warning is so infrequent and so difficult.

This paper summarizes the Secretary-General's constraints and opportunities for early warning in each of its three stages (information gathering, analysis and dissemination) and makes suggestions about how some obstacles can be overcome. For technical and political reasons, the UN Secretary-General is now in a better position to carry out early warning than ever before but certain improvements are called for, namely: better targeting of desired information, increased intelligence-sharing, tighter confidentiality systems, easier access for on-site observation, a stronger analytical capacity (including scenario building), quicker feedback at headquarters and a more proactive approach in issuing warnings and undertaking response measures. This may be a tall order, but the goal of early warning for conflict prevention is worthy of all such efforts.

I. Historical Review

Even in the depths of World War II, some nations and people were already considering how to build a durable peace and a stronger international organization after the War. There was widespread agreement that the international civil service, introduced with the League of Nations, needed to be retained and strengthened. Lamenting that states had always sounded the alarm too late, in 1943 Lord Viscount Cranborne of Great Britain proposed that this vital job be given to the "chief permanent official" of the new organization.

> [He] should be empowered to bring before members on his own initiative, any potentially dangerous development at an early stage before an aggressor has time to gird himself for war ... If the Earl, Lord Perth [Sir Eric Drummond, the League's first Secretary-General], had enjoyed this power as Secretary-General of the League, the history of the League might have been a very different one.[1]

He reasoned that

> it is always embarrassing...for a nation, and especially a small nation, to attribute aggressive intentions to a neighbouring country with whom it is ostensibly in friendly relations. Consequently the tendency ... was for Member States of the League to raise a question of this kind when the situation was already so acute that there was no way of averting armed conflict ... [T]he chief permanent official... will be an international official and therefore not open to the same embarrassment as Ministers of individual states.

In fact, the need to give a warning role to the League Secretary-General had been recognized by the League Assembly in its earliest days, but the notion was never enshrined in the League's Covenant, nor actively implemented.[2]

In June 1945, the fifty nations which gathered in San Francisco to prepare and sign UN Charter decided to include a novel provision which gave the UN Secretary-General, who was accountable to no nation in particular but to the organization as a whole, a right that heretofore had only been conferred upon states: the ability to convoke a meeting of the Security Council on his own initiative in order to issue a warning on a matter that was not yet on the Council's agenda. In Article 99, the Charter states:

> The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

Sir Eric Drummond, the first Secretary-General of the League, commented on this new provision:

> The Secretary-General of the League could only act through and at the request of a Member of the League; the Secretary-General of the UN can act on his own initiative. In view of this difference in functioning, the method of approach of the two officers is or was necessarily of a different character.

The Preparatory Commission in San Francisco itself commented on the new Article 99 as follows:

> Under Article 99 of the Charter, moreover, he [the Secretary-General] has been given a special right which goes beyond any power previously accorded to the head of an international organization, viz, to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter (not merely any dispute or situation) which, in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. It is impossible to foresee how this Article will be applied; but the responsibility it confers upon the Secretary-General will require the exercise of the highest qualities of political judgement, tact and integrity ...[3]

As it turns out, Article 99 has been invoked very infrequently. The major explicit and implicit invocations of Article 99 are described in **Table 1** (which covers the period 1946-90). The only ones that qualify as rigorous invocations are those dealing with the crises in the Congo (1960), in Iran (1979) and in Lebanon (1989).[4] The first and third instances constituted "late" warning but are nonetheless significant cases of warning. In the Iranian hostage case (1979), Article 99 served merely as a means to address the Security Council on a crisis that was already in the spotlight but which the Council had not taken up formally. In all other cases in Table 1, the matter had already been placed on the agenda of the Council by one or more Member States before the Secretary-General addressed it (though he may have been the first to speak to the issue at the meeting). A closer look at these invocations, however, gives clear indications about the practical and political constraints on early warning by the Secretary-General.

The first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, never explicitly invoked Article 99 before the Security Council, which became a platform for Cold War oratory and rivalry almost immediately after the UN was created. Still, Lie set a precedent by asserting his right to speak on his own initiative during Security Council debates, acting in the spirit of independence of Article 99, even if he was not warning of new threats to the peace.[5] In 1950, Lie did sound the alarm about a threat to the peace: the invasion of South Korea. He was the first to speak in the Council at the crucial meeting of June 25, 1950, shortly after the North Korean attack, but since the Korea item was placed on the Council's agenda by the US, which had called the urgent meeting, it was not a clear cut case of Article 99 invocation (because the matter was brought to the attention of the Council by the US). In any case, Lie's address was hardly even a

"warning." The massive invasion had begun over 12 hours earlier. Furthermore, Lie had learned about the attack from the US, through a midnight call on June 24 from the US Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization. After receiving confirmation from UN field observers, the Secretary-General did at least validate the allegations of aggression (a useful contribution in itself) and implored the Council to take action (which it did because the Soviet Union was absent and therefore unable to use its veto right).

It was only with the arrival of the proactive Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold that Article 99 was applied vigorously and rigorously. The most important case was in the Congo. In January 1960, Hammarskjold made a tour of many African states, especially the newly emerging states. He personally found that the Congo, due to receive its independence from Belgium a few months later, was ill-prepared for self-government.[6] Furthermore, the UN's Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations raised serious doubts about "the future of the new republic as an integrated nation."[7] Demonstrating his ability to "meet trouble half way," he sent his very capable Undersecretary-General for Special Political Affairs, Ralph J. Bunche, to represent the UN at the Congolese independence ceremonies on June 30. Using intentionally vague wording, Hammarskjold gave Bunche a mandate to "be available to the [Congolese government] for consultations and discussions on matters relating to the United Nations interest ... [and] to report directly to me, with such recommendations as you may consider suitable."[8] When Bunche cabled back his first-hand observations of the outbreak of violence—he himself had been held at gun point—and described his frequent discussions with the new government leaders, Hammarskjold had an excellent source of on-site information.[9] On July 12, when the Congolese leaders requested Hammarskjold to intervene, he was already quite familiar with the situation. He called an urgent meeting of the Security Council for July 13, 1960, where he described the situation and presented his proposal. At the meeting, he said: "I believe the UN may be able to save this situation, chaotic as it is rapidly becoming."[10] The danger had broad, global implications since the superpowers supported opposing factions in the Congo, which could easily have become a flash point. At Hammarskjold's recommendation, the Security Council created a peace-keeping force, called ONUC (Force de l'Organization des Nations Unies au Congo) which played a difficult but stabilizing role over the next four years.

Secretary-General U Thant was a strong proponent and practitioner of "quiet diplomacy" and he never invoked Article 99 explicitly. At times he was urged to do so by various governments and outside observers (e.g., in the Biafran/Nigeria conflict 1967-70), but he resisted because he felt that matters should only be brought before the Council if agreement on action was likely to be achieved, something which was not easy in the polarized Security Council of the Cold War. He insisted that "nothing could be more divisive or useless than for the

Secretary-General to invoke Article 99 in a situation where there is no real possibility of the Security Council agreeing on any useful positive role."[11] Nevertheless, his patience reached its limits in the East Pakistan/Bangladesh conflict of 1971. In the first part of the year, the Secretary-General found himself limited to a humanitarian role as millions of refugees fled to India from East Pakistan. Neither India nor Pakistan (supported by the USSR and the US, respectively) wanted the UN to intervene politically, and considered the matter an "internal affair." But U Thant recognized the serious potential for international armed conflict and on July 20, in a written memorandum, privately urged the Council to intervene, despite the slim chances that the Council would act. "The crisis is unfolding in the context of the long-standing, and unresolved, differences between India and Pakistan—differences which gave rise to open warfare only six years ago. ... [A] major conflict in the subcontinent could all too easily expand ... [T]he present situation [is] a potential threat to peace and security ... It is for these reasons that I am taking the unusual step of reporting to the President of the Security Council on an question which has not been inscribed on the Council's agenda."[12] A few weeks later, U Thant made his memorandum public after the Council ignored it, to further prod it. But the Council (led by the superpowers) continued to avoid the dealing with the situation right up to the beginning of war in December 1971.

Perhaps the greatest failure and the greatest success in early warning took place during the tenure of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Before the genocide in Rwanada in 1994, many signals went unheeded by the UN and important avenues were left uninvestigated, leading to the UN's unpreparedness and helplessness in the face of an unprecedented escalation of conflict and a genocide that led to approximately a million deaths. Some of ignored signals in Rwanda are described later in this paper.

By contrast, the signals of danger in Macedonia were not ignored. Here, the main credit for sounding the alarm goes to the Republic's President, Kiro Gligorov. He raised the issue with the Secretary-General in the fall of 1992 and lobbied the Council's leading members to promote an active response. The new state, born in September 1991 out of the break up of the former Yugoslavia, found itself faced immediately with enormous internal and external threats. The country possessed a diverse ethnic mixture: three-fifths Macedonian, one-fifth Albanian, and the rest Turks, Greeks, Gypsies, Serbs, Vlachs, Muslim Slavs and Bulgarians. The land-locked nation of 2 million is "surrounded by countries with a historical claim to the territory, a political claim to protect an ethnic minority, or, in the case of Greece, a diplomatic claim to the very name Macedonia."[13] Should one neighbor intervene, others likely would follow, leading to a European war that could bring in NATO partners Greece and Turkey on opposite sides. The deployment of UN monitors along the Macedonian border served as a deterrent to aggression

from the outside and a stabilizer internally. It was an early warning system in itself. The monitors could detect probing missions that would suggest preparations for a frontal attack, and could help the UN Secretary-General to sound the alarm, either through Article 99 or in a less dramatic fashion at an early stage by passing information to influential member states.[14]

Though there have been few formal invocations of Article 99 before the Council, it is regularly used as the legislative justification for a host of independent activities by the Secretary-General. Some of these activities are quite relevant to warning, such as monitoring and fact-finding. For instance, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar justified his independent investigations of Iraqi chemical weapons use in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war using the Article 99 legislative authority. (He preferred not to use the contentious General Assembly resolution 37/98 because the vote on that resolution was far from unanimous.) Other activities are justified, in part, by Article 99 but are only indirectly related (e.g., "good offices" functions such as mediation). Dag Hammarskjold asserted that the "necessary implication" of Article 99 is "a broad discretion to conduct inquiries and to engage in informal diplomatic activity in regard to matters which 'may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.'"[15]

Over the past fifty years, a succession of UN Secretaries-General have applied Article 99 to enhance the powers, stature and authority of their office. Thus, its value in practice has gone far beyond warning. However, its original intent remains: to alert the Council to emerging threats to the peace. At the end of the Cold War, this role has again become the focus of much attention on the part of governments and academics, under the name of early warning, a term adopted from the humanitarian and disaster management fields.

II. Early Warning Defined and the Typology of Conflict Management

The definition of early warning is the subject of debate among academics and practitioners. For the purpose of this paper, the following definition is proposed:

> Early warning is the act of alerting a recognized authority (e.g., the UN Security Council) to the threat of a new (or renewed) armed conflict at a sufficiently early stage for that authority to attempt preventive action.

By this definition, early warning by the Secretary-General need not necessarily involve interventions before the Security Council. Warnings can also be made before other bodies such as the General Assembly or one of the UN's committees or commissions, or even to selected governments in private or public. In this work, however, we consider only those warnings which are made in writing in an official UN document.

The above definition covers only "early warning" of armed conflicts. It could be broadened to include any political threats (not just threats of armed conflict) and, even further, to natural disasters. This paper, however, is concerned only with the potential for armed conflict.

What constitutes "early"? The practical answer follows from the definition is: in time to make an effort at conflict prevention. If there is not sufficient time to take potentially preventive action, then the term "late warning" is appropriate. If the conflict is already rapidly escalating, the term "warning" may not even be applicable at all. For conflict prevention and preparedness, early warning should be done as far in advance as possible. However, it is harder to make accurate predictions over the long range and unless the threat is real states are unlikely to respond to an early warning. Thus early warning can be measured on the scale of time (how early the warning) and intensity of the warning (how strong the warning). A balance point has to be reached in practice, which will depend largely on the nature of the threat. A desirable early warning period for most conflicts would be one to six months.

In spite of the logical link between early warning and preventive action, it is not necessary that a conflict be successfully prevented for early warning to have been achieved. Early warning can take place even if preventive action was not taken. It is only important that the warning be made early enough that prevention action *can be attempted*.

Early warning can best be illustrated in relation to a generalized conflict, with its escalation, crisis peak(s) and descending phases as shown in **Figure 1**. Usually, the Secretary-general intervenes in a conflict only after it has escalated, and a large number of lives have been lost. In current thinking (if not current efforts) more emphasis is being placed on preventive action and early warning has taken on new importance. Early warning is an activity which is done in advance of the steep incline of conflict curve.

Even if early warning fails to produce a response and the conflict escalates, the effort at early information gathering should help the Secretary-General (and his staff) be more effective in handling with the conflict in the later stages, also illustrated in Figure 1. In relation to the three stages of conflict, six roles for the Secretary-General are identified: early warning, preventive diplomacy/deployment, crisis management, conflict resolution, peace-building and peace enforcement. To identify a threat, someone in the Secretariat must notify the Secretary-General. Before the conflict begins or escalates, the UN could and should exercise its powers of prevention, through diplomacy or preventive deployment. If escalation is probable, the Secretary-General or another UN body has a duty to issue an early warning to a larger body. In the second stage of conflict, as fighting is occuring, the UN takes on the crisis/conflict management role. When parties are ready to reach a negotiated settlement, then the UN works

for conflict resolution. Thus, information-gathering and analysis for early warning should be seen in the spectrum of the Secretary-General's activities. Because there is so much overlap in the information requirements, it would be efficient make early warning a mandate of a larger information/intelligence unit under the Secretary-General.

In certain circumstances, usually after an act of aggression has occurred and the Security Council has imposed sanctions, the Secretary-General may play a role in monitoring or supervision. For example, he was tasked with helping the UN Special Commission in its monitoring of the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Finally, the UN often maintains humanitarian and development aid in a peace-building effort aimed a maintaining the infrastructures (e.g., educational, economic, and social) that are necessary to maintain peace.

A list of conflicts in which the Secretary-General has intervened has been prepared[16] and his roles analyzed with the above framework. It shows that in the first fifty years of the UN, the number of early warning cases is fewer than five percent of conflicts handled. In addition to the examples of the Congo (1960) and East Pakistan/Bangladesh (1971) mentioned above, there are the cases of Bahrain (1970) and Macedonia (1992). In both these latter cases, as it turns out, effective preventive action was also taken.

The record shows that early warning is not a frequent activity of the UN Secretary-General, despite his Charter mandate. It is therefore natural to identify the difficulties associated with early warning and to explore the possibilities for improvements. Especially after the Cold War, one would expect that an expansion of the Secretary-General's role in this area would be both desirable and possible.

III. Old Constraints and New Opportunities

The dilemma faced by a Secretary-General before warning of a new threat to the peace is much like that faced by a person wondering whether to pull a fire alarm. As the signs of fire appear, a number of people are usually in a position to sound the alarm. In the UN, member states also have the right to bring threats to the peace to the attention of the Council.[17] To sound the alarm, the Secretary-General must either have new and unique information on the danger or, once the danger is seen by several actors, he must be bold enough to choose to quickly raise the issue. The two main reasons for the dearth of warnings from the Secretary-General are pinpointed in this analogy. He rarely has more information than the most powerful members of the UN (or states closest to the conflict) and, when a conflict becomes obvious, he often

prefers that states take the initiative in sounding the alarm because they will then be more motivated to mount a response. This does not mean that his early warning role is unimportant, but rather it shows that it can be difficult to implement.

The difficulties in obtaining unique information and fostering political will can, again, be illustrated by historical cases. In Korea (1950), the Secretary-General received the initial information about the invasion from the US, and so from the beginning was behind on knowledge about events. Even the UN Commission on Korea (UNCOK), stationed in Korea, drew most of its information from US diplomatic and military staff in the country. When originally informed of the invasion, the Secretary-General did offer to invoke Article 99, apparently feeling confident enough about the authenticity of the US information, but he was told that the US itself was planning to call an urgent Council meeting. While little new information was provided by UNCOK, its confirmation of the attack was itself quite useful, because it was a neutral international observer stationed at close hand to the conflict.

In the East Pakistan/Bangladesh conflict (1971), the Secretary-General, after waiting months for states to raise the issue in the Council, sent a memorandum to try to push the Council into deliberation. He did not want to call a formal meeting of the Council but rather sought to "nudge" the Council towards deliberations and action. But there was no political will in the Council to initiate discussions until the war broke out some five months later. In the Korea case, the Secretary-General was limited by a lack of information. In the East Pakistan/Bangladesh case, it was the lack of political will (both on his part and on that of the Council) that prevented the Secretary-General from invoking Article 99.

Knowing that the keys to early warning are good information and strong political will, we can identify various means to improve the UN's early warning system. It is apparent that the information should be clear and convincing in identifying an emerging threat. This entails not only the gathering of information from the field but also a substantial means for analysis. Within the UN there must also be a consultation process to consider the results of such analysis and a means to move critical information quickly "up the ladder" to the Secretary-General. In addition to sharing information with the information to Council members, it may also be necessary to disseminate further in order to promote action.

1. Information Gathering

Where does the Secretary-General obtain his information about emerging crises? The main information sources are members states, UN agencies/personnel, the media and non-

governmental organizations. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of each of these sources are summarized in **Table 2**. Selected historical incidents can illustrate the practical problems and opportunities for the UN. Here, we focus on the dramatic moments when the Secretary-General first learned about major conflicts.

Governments occasionally submit reports to the Secretary-General on their own actions (in justification); more often they provide information on the actions of others (in condemnation). In 1948, Trygve Lie learned about the Arab attack on Israel (on 15 May 1948) through a cablegram from Egyptian government to the Security Council President[18]. As previously noted, he heard about the North Korean invasion (on 25 June 1950) in a mid-night call from a US official[19]. Dag Hammarskjold received allegations of a Vietnamese attack on Laos in a cable from the Laotian foreign minister (on 4 September 1959), who apparently magnified the threat. U Thant was informed by a US State Department official about the presence of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba (on 20 Oct 1962) two days before Kennedy's public announcement of the threat[20]. Perez de Cuellar learned of the US-led attack on Iraq in call from President Bush a hour or so before the attack began (January 1991).

UN officials in the field can supply important and dramatic news quickly to headquarters. They are often the most objective sources, though they are often very limited in what they can observe (and anticipate). The arrival of the Six-Day War (5 Jun 1967) was conveyed to headquarters at 3 am (prompting Ralph Bunche to disturb U Thant at home) by the commander of UN peace-keeping force in the region (UNEF)[21]. Similarly, UN observers stationed near the Suez Canal informed Kurt Waldheim (6 Oct 1973) of the start of the Yom Kippur War[22].

The news media is sometimes ahead of diplomatic and internal channels. Lie learned of the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia (22 Feb 1948) in a newscast on his car radio[23]. U Thant learned of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia (20 Aug 1968) on a radio newscast carrying the Soviet Government's announcement of such.[24] He learned of the proclamation of independence of Bangladesh, and the ensuing violence (26 March 1971), in a report of the Indian News Agency (monitored by the Office of Public Information) which, in turn, cited the Voice of the Free Bangladesh Radio.

UN field offices routinely send excerpts or summaries of local press reports to headquarters but these usually focus on how the UN itself is being covered. Realizing that UN personnel who work in over one hundred countries at UN Information Centres (UNICs) and UN Development Programme (UNDP) offices are an untapped source of early warning information, Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar requested "the heads of the UN agencies and field offices throughout the world to inform him, on an urgent basis, of any situation that could give rise to a major humanitarian crisis."[25] The Office for Research and the Collection of Information

(ORCI), which maintained an early warning mandate during its five-year existence from 1987-1992, requested the UNICs "to supply the office with all relevant, new and reliable information relating to 'political developments' in the region they cover." Information is to be based on "official documents and comments, press analyses, and reports available in the country or countries served by each Centre."[26]

With the advent of the "information age" and the end of the Cold War, there are new possibilities for information gathering which can are just beginning to be explored by the UN. Most of these arise from the rapid progress in technological innovation. Computers communications and the Internet provide a tremendous boost to the capacity to gather, share and store information.

An increasing number of states and private companies are gaining reconnaissance satellites, which operate above the boundaries of national sovereignty and which can potentially observe all countries of the world. The images obtained from advanced reconnaissance satellites are good enough to count people in an open market place even at night (using radar) and even to spot snipers. At present, however, the UN does not have automatic access to such images. A major priority should be to obtain regular, if not continuous, access to satellite imagery possessed by member states or purchased from private sources. There is not, at present, any agreements for the automatic transfer of satellite information (or any information for that matter) to the UN and only vague responsibilities are recognized by Member States. These responsibilities should be formalized in one or more information-sharing agreements to help the UN better anticipate conflicts.

Aerial reconnaissance can also provide important information. Overflying vast tracts of land, planes with high-resolution cameras and transmitters can send detailed images for photointerpretation back to headquarters as they are being taken. For border patrols (e.g., as in Macedonia), aerial reconnaissance can permit a view at least 30-40 km into the opposing territory, which is helpful to identify any threatening troop concentrations.

Perhaps it is time in reexamine President Dwight Eisenhower's 1960 proposal for a "UN aerial reconnaissance capability ... to detect preparations for attack" to operate "in the territories of all nations prepared to accept such inspection."[27] The US President had generously offered to provide planes and equipment, as well as to accept observation on US territory. Such openness and magnanimity towards the UN is unlikely from the US today, but it might be possible for some group of nations to commit themselves to developing such a global "confidence-building regime."

Ground-based observation technologies can assist the UN in its field missions. In addition to satellite input, UN forces would benefit from night vision devices (which allow

peace-keepers to patrol better at night) and various types of sensors and detectors (such a ground sensors and radar to spot moving vehicles and persons). The NATO forces which took over from the UN in the former Yugoslavia had these, illustrating how, by NATO standards, the UN is mal-equipped. Historically, in many of the UN's field operations, the most advanced observation device employed was the human eyeball, sometimes aided by binoculars.

Even still, information gained by advanced observation technologies (satellite, aerial or on-site) may not be enough to reveal the hidden intentions of leaders. Often the only people to know about a planned escalation of conflict are the plotters and their associates. In the past, some "insiders" have sought to warn the UN, placing themselves at great risk. For instance, in Rwanda in early 1994, several months before the world witnessed the worst case of genocide since World War II, the UN peace-keeping force stationed there (UNAMIR) received information from a Rwandan military officer that a group of high-ranking Hutus within the government were planning the mass slaughter of Tutsis. The UN Force Commander, Romeo Dallaire of Canada, requested permission from UN headquarters to provide asylum to the informer. Having no system to handle asylum seekers, headquarters turned down the request. The macabre plot was not uncovered until well after the systematic killings had escalated beyond control. A key element in the extremists' plot was to force Belgian peace-keepers to leave the country at the outset of the slaughter, since they were the best equipped peace-keepers in the country and the only ones remotely capable of putting a stop to the spread of genocide. So Rwandan government forces confronted a group of Belgian paratroopers and requested them to lay down their arms. Not knowing of the plot, the peace-keepers innocently complied, only to be slaughtered. An outraged Belgium withdrew the rest of its peace-keepers shortly thereafter, just as the coup plotters had desired. During the subsequent fighting, the unprepared UN Force Commander complained about being "deaf and blind" in the field. This story shows that more and better information is necessary at an early stage and that a mechanism should be developed to grant rapid asylum to those who put their lives at risk when they have vital information relating to keeping the peace.

Obtaining information directly from locals who observe or are affected by menacing developments is a key to early warning. Electronic mail, available through the Internet, has the potential for easier, cheaper, more rapid and widespread communication between individuals and the UN. The UN has already established a 24-hour human rights "fax hotline" in Geneva to receive complaints from individuals. By providing an e-mail address for receipt of similar information, the UN should receive even more warnings and vital information. While e-mail (and, indeed, long distance calling/faxing) may not yet be available to many potential "warners" in third world countries, it's availability is bound to increase in coming years. With both the

Internet and the telephone, however, there remains the challenge of securing confidentiality during transmission and after reception.

The Internet currently provides wide-ranging background information, which can be useful in exploring the nature of conflicts, current and emerging. The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs has already established excellent sites for information-sharing on areas of conflict.[28] ReliefWeb is an excellent example. This publicly-available database covers countries where disasters (natural or manmade) are actually occurring.[29] Because it uses media reports, it has the advantage that information that could not normally be provided by the UN (e.g., not fully substantiated or embarrassing information) is included on the UN site. The countries covered by ReliefWeb are only those for which a consolidated UN appeal has been made. This requires a request from the state itself and therefore rules out many countries which might be targeted for early warning. In Africa, for example, the conflict-ridden countries currently covered by ReliefWeb are Angola, the Great Lakes countries (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire), Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan.[30] Nigeria, a country with no current humanitarian emergency but with significant potential for such disaster, would not be covered.[31]

Human rights abuses can be important indicators of emerging or escalating conflict. Several UN human rights agencies can provide useful information. The UN Commission on Human Rights has a mandate for global monitoring of human rights. Its special rapporteurs conduct in-depth investigations of human rights abuses. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has among his/her functions "prevention and early warning." In 1994 the 24-hour hot line was established to "allow the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in Geneva to monitor and react rapidly to human rights emergencies, such as the 1994 crisis in Rwanda."[32] Input is solicited from victims, their relatives and NGOs to initiate "urgent, potentially life-saving contact" with the Special Procedures Branch of the Centre. The hotline and database are designed to improve the "timely flow of information from and to special rapporteurs from anywhere in the world", and form the basis of an electronic network linking the globe[33].

2. Analysis of Information

In order to undertake early warning, the UN also needs a more sophisticated analytical capacity in the Secretariat. Thorough analysis of incoming information is necessary to spot trends, to corroborate alarming reports and to identify further information that must be sought. This latter function is an important part of the feedback loop. Early warning is more easily achieved when specific information is targeted and deliberately sought out, based usually on

"leads" provided in the general information-gathering process. Those who plot an escalation of violence usually try to hide their plans and preparations. Hence, it may require some keen "detective work" to uncover even the general nature of such plots. Two important indicators are the importation of armaments (usually done secretly or illegally) and the control over resources (e.g., mining activities or the drug trade). The UN has a poor monitoring system for such indicators, perhaps reflecting its fear of infringing on "internal affairs." It is also important to identify the vested interests economically within the country as well as outside. For example, in Katanga in 1960-62 it was vital for the UN to know the policies of the mining firms which backed Katangan succession.

In order to carry out early warning and contingency planning, the UN needs to constantly develop scenarios for potential outcomes of both international and internal situations in the short and long-term. Most armies have contingency plans for all kinds of threats, from conventional wars to nuclear holocaust, so it is only reasonable that the UN should develop contingency plans to respond to armed conflicts. Unfortunately, the UN has not yet developed a system for scenario-building. Now that the need for greater emphasis on conflict prevention is recognized by nations (at least on paper), the time has come to develop realistic mechanisms. Analysis is needed not only to spot negative developments but also to identify positive developments which are to be reinforced.

The strongest analytical capacity, of the type needed for early warning, exists in the Information and Research (I&R) Unit of the Situation Centre, which is part of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO). Though small, with only four officers, it has the greatest "reach" in terms of information gathering and analysis because these officers are "connected" to national intelligence systems, having been seconded from them. Created in 1994 with only a US intelligence officer, the unit now has officers from four of the five members of the Security Council (France, Russia, UK, USA but not China).[34] The officers are not limited to peace-keeping operations and regularly provide assistance to other departments and the Office of the Secretary-General. The have produced important information/intelligence reports which have gone well beyond the scope of regular UN reports. They have included information on arms flows and other covert assistance from States. They have evaluated the motivations of parties, prepared threat assessments and other forecasts. Unfortunately, the I&R unit does not have a specific mandate for early warning and so it does early warning only in an ad hoc fashion.

3. Shared Responsibilities and Consultations

Before information reaches the Secretary-General, it is usually received and "processed" to some

extent by personnel in the Secretariat, including his Executive Office. Though the Secretary-General is sometimes informed by government representatives directly, the general flow of information on new developments is from the desk officer (who usually specializes in several countries in a given region) to the division head to the Under-Secretary-General and to the Secretary-General.

Several departments within the Secretariat currently have responsibilities for early warning, as do the various human rights bodies mentioned above. The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) has "primary responsibility" within the UN Secretariat for preventive action and peacemaking[35]. This includes a mandate "to identify potential or actual conflicts in whose resolution the United Nations could play a useful role." The six regional divisions within DPA are each charged with identifying "potential crisis areas and providing *early warning* to the Secretary-General on developments and situations affecting peace and security."[36]

The most ambitious and focused early warning system for conflict yet established in the UN is the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). It currently involves some 3-4 professional staff and a significant computerized capacity. The system incorporates a multitude of indicators and information sources (statistical and textual) to allow monitoring of deterioration in over 100 nations. However, the system has yet to produce a single "early warning," though it has been operational since July 1995. The efforts in the initial stages were deficient in that too much reliance was placed on statistics, computer databases and automated computations for pattern recognition and neural networks. In colloquial terms, the first efforts relied too much on a "black box" approach but a more "hands on" proactive approach is currently being taking, involving field trips and detailed reports.

It is generally recognized that, traditionally, different sections of the UN, as with many bureaucracies, lacked coordination and an effective information flow.[37] In order to address this problem within the Secretariat, a DHA/DPA/DPKO Framework for Coordination was developed after the creation of DHA in 1992. One goal is "joint analysis of early warning of a looming crisis, within a broader framework for the coordination of operational planning and implementation among the three departments." This includes "early warning information gathering and analysis, planning of preventive action, fact-finding, etc." Desk officers are to exchange "early warning signals, staff reports, internal meeting notes, maps, assessments, agency situation reports, etc."[38] An Interdepartmental committee meets regularly to facilitate this. It has also been stated that there is "agreement as to the responsibility and criteria for 'sounding the alarm' in impending crises."

On the larger, inter-agency level, an Ad Hoc Working Group of the Administrative

Committee on Coordination (ACC) has held Consultations since 1992 on "Early Warning of New Flows of Refugees and Displaced Persons." The Consultations are held every month or two; they are organized and chaired by DHA and include many UN agencies (FAO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, WHO, WFP, IOM), UN Secretariat sections (e.g., DPA and the Centre for Human Rights Affairs), as well as the ICRC as an observer. Consensual reports from the meetings are prepared for the executive heads of the agencies and offices represented, as well as the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. In these reports, short lists of cases of urgent situations that might give rise to new flows are presented along with possible preventive/preparative measures to be taken by the Secretary-General or other high officials. Recently, the cases have been classified in terms of both the timing of the expected crisis and the estimated size of the displacement. The Ad Hoc Working Group also collaborates with the newly created Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which also has been given an early warning role.[39]

The IASC is composed of the executive heads of the UN humanitarian organizations as well as ICRC, the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies, the International Organization for Migration, and the non-governmental consortia International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Interaction and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response. The IASC usually develops the terms of reference for inter-agency appeals for international support in response to a natural or man-made disaster. So far, it has confined itself to disasters that have already occurred, not ones that are forecast.

4. Dissemination and the Political Will of Member States

Even the most progressive early warning body, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Early Warning of Refugee Flows, complains that warnings that are not acted upon or even not considered:

> The effectiveness of the Ad Hoc Working Group's access to the executive level has, regrettably, remained a serious concern of every participant. While the reports of the Consultations on Early Warning reach the offices of executive heads, there is uncertainty as to whether the message contained in these brief alerts is received and acted upon. Everybody is aware of the information-overload problem of senior managers and of the self-evident need of senior officials to attend to the pressing issues of the moment. Still, if the costs in human lives and resources of today's megacrises are to be lowered markedly, the current neglect of early warnings for preventive purposes must be reversed.[40]

The Secretaries-General, similarly, have complained about the lack of interest on the part of member states in receiving early warnings.

In principle, governments are in support of early warning by the Secretary-General. The Security Council and the General Assembly have passed several resolutions to promote early warning and have encouraged the Secretary-General to employ Article 99. They did so in relation to the Secretary-General's 1992 Agenda for Peace[41]. The General Assembly did so in its resolutions on the "Protection and Security of Small States"[42], and through various declarations it has approved.[43] In the 1992 Declaration on UN Fact-finding, the General Assembly endorsed an even expanded mandate:

> 28. The Secretary-General should monitor the state of international peace and security *regularly and systematically* in order to provide early warning of disputes or situations which might threaten international peace and security. The Secretary-General may bring relevant information to the attention of the Security Council and, where appropriate, of the General Assembly. [emphasis added]

Unfortunately, a regular and systematic forecasting system, producing periodic reports on potential or actual threats to the peace, has not been created within the Secretariat.

The crux of the problem for early warning and Article 99 invocations has been that the major powers will themselves alert the Security Council to threats to the peace if and when they see the need; if they do not bring such matters up, it usually means that they do not want it brought up. If the Secretary-General "forces" the matter on the agenda of the Council by invoking Article 99, he risks raising the ire of one or more members of the Council. He may be dissuaded by them in advance or may simply fear that there will be little chance of action, since the Council members have already decided not to handle the matter. The only case where the Secretary-General can claim to have special privilege is when he possesses unique information, not available to the major powers, which will galvanize the Council to action. But it is rare that the Secretary-General will know about a new dispute before the major powers.

The "solution" of this political problem is to develop a new norm for early warning, in which the Secretary-General regularly draws attention to potential conflict at an early stage in spite of the reluctance of some members of the Council. This would be a natural exercise of Article 99 and has been requested by nations (e.g., in the 1992 UN Fact-Finding Declaration). Such early warning entails a more proactive approach on the part of the Secretary-General, even when a UN response is not immediately possible. It also requires that the current early warning system be augmented, so that better information and analysis is available to the Secretary-General. A number of possible means of improvement are included in the next (recommendations) section.

Some "old constraints and new opportunities" for early warning are summarized in **Table 3**. Recent breakthroughs in information gathering, analysis and dissemination have been possible, thanks mostly to the rapid increase in computing power and the availability of the Internet. Still, this increase in information collection and handling has not resulted in a functioning early warning (EW) system. No unit within the UN Secretariat, including the office of the Secretary-General, has yet produced a series of early warnings. While the UN is not expected to match the major powers in the ability to gather and process information about impending threats, in order to do early warning, its capabilities need to be substantially increased.

IV. Recommendations: Towards an Effective UN Early Warning System

In the past few years, the constraints on developing early warning systems have been financial and managerial, as well as political and technical. The recent past has been characterized by deep financial cuts, loss of posts and institutional retrenchment. Still, with the UN reform process under way, there is reason to hope that an effective early warning system, as a vital component of effective conflict prevention and preparedness, can yet become a part of the UN Secretariat. The following recommendations are offered for consideration by the UN and its member states, such as Canada, which has been a strong supporter of UN early warning.

*** A single body should be designated with overall responsibility for the function of early warning (EW). This EW unit should be accountable for failures at early warning.**

Comment: Currently, the responsibility for early warning is spread out among several departments. In such a case, it is easy for each body to ignore the early warning responsibility, and evade the risks to be taken by issuing early warnings. It is proposed that one unit be held accountable for any lapses. While early warning can continue to be included in the mandates of several departments, one person (e.g., the unit chief) should be given the primary and coordinating role and made accountable. This will put the onus on that person/unit to produce early warnings. It should be accountable for both missed opportunities and for false alarms.

*** A learning mechanism should be part of the early warning system (EWS).**

Comment: Failures to issue early warnings, which can be expected to be frequent, should be

reviewed in order to determine if there are deficiencies in the system, improvements to be made and, more generally, lessons to be learned. In this way, the early warning system and individuals involved should "learn from experience" over time.

*** The EW unit should be provided with sufficient analytical skills to carry out its mandate.**

Comment: None of the bodies currently tasked with early warning have a sufficient analytical capacity. For the ambitious mandate of early warning, much information must be analysed and corroborated, leads must be followed and new information requirements identified. Formulations of potential scenarios and their continual modification, after checks against reality, are necessary. The Information and Research (I&R) Unit of the DPKO Situation Centre has demonstrated the capacity for this. This positive experience should be useful to the proposed EW unit.

*** Required information and potential information sources should be actively identified.**

Comment: Currently, the UN EW systems work in a passive information collection mode, which is only the first stage. As part of the feedback loop in the information system, analysis of incoming information should result in the identification of further information requirements. Often, these are crucial facts which must be "sought out." It is important to follow up leads and "hunches" in the second stage. Of course, the EW unit should be aware of limits imposed by international law and UN policies on its information-gathering activities.

*** The EW unit should be able to draw upon national information and intelligence agencies.**

Comment: National agencies sometimes have the most crucial information (e.g., on current troop positions, obtained by satellite, and illicit arms imports, obtained from assets). The Information and Research (I&R) Unit of the DPKO Situation Centre maintains very useful links with national intelligence services. HEWS, which is currently tasked with an ambitious EW mandate, lacks any such contacts. It is vital that the proposed EW unit be in communication with such bodies, since they often have crucial information necessary for early warning. Of course, it may be necessary to corroborate reports from several agencies and sources to avoid inaccuracies and national biases.

*** Bring UN human rights agencies into close contact with the early warning unit.**

Comment: Human rights violations are important indicators of potential conflict. It is desirable to maintain an on-going dialogue with the UN's human rights and refugee agencies (which are mostly based in Geneva).

*** Develop partnerships with NGOs, especially those engaged in early warning.**

Comment: Similarly, there will be great benefit to working more closely with groups that can provide some of this much needed information gathering and analysis capability. NGOs often have people in the field able to observe situations first hand and with many local contacts. They are often more than willing to provide warnings to the UN because of the risk to the safety of their staff in the event of an escalation of conflict. In addition, there are several NGO groups which are now forming with the mandate for early warning (e.g., the Forum on Early Warning and Response, of which the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs is already associated), with whom the EW unit should be in close contact.

*** Monitor early warnings issued by other organizations.**

In some cases, early warnings will already have been sounded, often from sources within the country in question and sometimes from outside groups. The EW unit should keep track of such warnings to prompt further investigation, and to corroborate or discount the reports.

*** Hold special meetings devoted to early warning of the DPA/DHA/DPKO framework committee regularly and invite UN human rights agencies to attend. To provide information, selected NGOs should also be invited to attend at least some or part of these meetings.**

*** Explore the possibilities for new information-gathering agreements and norms.**

There have been significant advances in on-site inspection standards for arms control and peace-keeping. The Chemical Weapons Convention provides for the most intrusive system of inspection of any treaty yet, based on an "any site, anytime" approach, qualified by managed access provisions.[44] In the not so distant future, similar "challenge inspection" provisions could be considered for incorporation a global on-site inspection system favoring transparency in military affairs. Eisenhower's proposal of 1960 for a UN aerial reconnaissance system (made five years after his first open skies proposal), described earlier, could be re-examine by

governments and others. This should be done in relation to the current Open Skies Treaty in Europe and the capacity of reconnaissance satellites. In addition, the UN should consider developing the capacity for aerial surveillance in its peace-keeping and other missions.

*** Explore the possibilities for technology.**

Comment: The UN has traditionally been technophobic, both in the field and at headquarters. As mentioned, there are many technological possibilities still waiting to be explored, from remote sensing technologies (such as aerial and satellite monitoring) to ground sensing. While there has been an expressed interest in technology within certain quarters of the UN (e.g., in the Peace-keeping Committee and in UN expert reports on verification) there has not been even a detailed study about how technology can have a positive impact on peace and security and play a role in UN's tasks, including early warning.

*** The officer in charge of early warning should not be responsible for proposing response options. This responsibility should be held by a different body.**

Comment: A requirement that the early warning coordinator or unit also recommend potential responses to the threat will slow down, or make impossible, the early warning process. While such recommendations can be attached to the warning, the "early warners" should be unencumbered from that obligation. Their warning should, however, provide an analysis of the threat with as much information as possible that could be useful in the consideration of responses.

*** More broadly, the UN should consider the creation a Civilian/Military Information Centre (CMIC) with a responsibility for handling information at all stages of the conflict, from prior to escalation (leading to early warnings) to the post-conflict peace-building stage. The EW unit could be part of such a body.**

Comment: This integrated approach has much to commend it. It would allow for information gathering through the life cycle of a conflict and across the military/civilian divide. This will help smooth the transition between early warning and peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building. There is a strong need for a body within the Secretariat which is dedicated to information gathering and analysis. In the past, a number of large peace-keeping operations (PKOs) included a distinct military information branch (MIB) in the field. Various UN

operations (from the Congo[45] to the former Yugoslavia) have shown the utility of dedicated information bodies (MIBs) in the field. The need for strengthened informational proceedures, both at headquarters and in the field, has been recognized. Both the Secretary-General and the Council have stressed the need for improved information capacity.[46] The current capacity of the Information and Research Unit of the DPKO Situation Centre already assists considerably in many non-peace-keeping tasks, including early warning. In a CMIC, the capacity for analysis could be used in the spectrum of UN roles (including, early warning, peace-keeping, and humanitarian assistance, as well as possibly arms control verification).

*** Issuing reports on early warning should become a regular activity both within the Secretariat (i.e., reports to the Secretary General) and to the Member States (i.e., in reports from the Secretary General).**

Comment: To establish a new "early warning" norm, which will help to make the UN a more proactive body, reporting should be regular, even if there are no early warnings to make. One possibility would be to include a section on potential threats to the peace in the Annual Report of the Secretary-General. In addition, regular EW reports should be made by the Secretary-General to the Security Council, both in the formal and the informal sessions. This is the essence of the responsibility imposed on him by Article 99 and as part of the UN's overall responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The early warning function should becomes a regular part of his service.

The UN Secretary-General is now positioned better than ever before to engage in early warning. There are early warning mandates from the Security Council and the General Assembly. The UN possesses better information systems than ever before. In addition, there appear to be progressive movers within the UN's international civil service and a new Secretary-General who is thoroughly familiar and experienced with the UN's role in peace-keeping. A lot will now depend on his progressive, proactive nature and the receptivity of UN member states.

Will the UN maintain its habitual pattern of *reacting* to conflicts instead being *proactive* in an attempt to warn and preempting them? If the new Secretary-General sees a new era, ripe for an expanded UN mandate, then there is every possibility for hope. Then Article 99 will be not merely a theoretical possibility, seldom used, but a living provision of the UN Charter and an additional tool to save the world from much misery and suffering. UN early warning is surely an idea whose time has come.

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ENDNOTES

1. Lord Viscount Cranborne, House of Lords, Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, 5th Series, vol. cxxvii, 15 April 1943.
2. On 10 December 1920 the League Assembly adopted a resolution stating: "[i]t shall be the duty of the Secretary-General to call to the attention of the Council to any facts which in his opinion show that a member of the League has become a Covenant-breaking State within the Meaning of Article 16. Upon receiving such an intimation, the Council shall, on the request of any of its members, hold a meeting with the least possible delay to consider it..." Records of First Assembly, Plenary, 1920, 400.
3. as quoted in Rovine, Arthur W., "The First Fifty Years: The Secretary-General in World Politics, 1920-1970", A.W. Sijthoff, Leyden, 1970, p.205.
4. The rigorous application of Article 99 entails a declaration to the Council that there may exist a new (not currently considered) threat to the peace. In UN procedural terms, this means adding a new item to the agenda of the Security Council. The Provisional Rules of Procedure (Rule 2) of the Council further state that "[t]he President shall call a meeting of the Security Council ... if the Secretary-General brings to the attention of the Security Council any matter under Article 99."
5. The right to provide input to the Council was enshrined in rule 22 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council which states: "The Secretary-General, or his deputy acting on his behalf, may make either oral or written statements to the Security Council concerning *any question* under consideration by it" [emphasis added].
6. Urquart, Brian, "Hammarskjold," Knopf, New York, 1973, p.389.
7. Ona B. Forest, Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations "Belgian Congo: Summary and Outlook," (Draft Report) June 1960, UN Archives, Dag-1/2.2.1.35.

8. "Letter of Designation, Secretary-General to RJB," 20 June 1960, UN Archives, Dag-1/2.2.1-35.
9. For instance, on July 9, Bunche cabled the warning: "Powder keg here. But full explosion may be avoided." Urquhart, Brain, "Ralph Bunche: An American Life," W.W. Norton, New York, pp.308-9.
10. ibid, p.311.
11. Cordier, Andrew W. and Harrelson, Max, "Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations," Volume VIII (U Thant, 1968-1971), Columbia University Press, New York, 1977, p. 386.
12. "Text of Memorandum to the President of the Security Council, 20 July 1970" in Cordier and Harrelson, Public Papers (ibid), Volume VIII (U Thant, 1968-1971), p. 563-66.
13. "U.S. troops in Macedonia seen as positive foreign policy step", The Washington Post, 11/12/93.
14. The mission, however, lacks the means and skills to gather and analyse data about intentions (political intelligence).
15. Hammarskjold, Dag, "The International Civil Servant in Law and Fact: Lecture Delivered in Congregation at Oxford University, May 30, 1961", in Cordier, Andrew and Foote, Wilder, "The Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, Volume IV (1958-1961), Columbia University Press, New York, p.477.
16. The list is to be published in the near future.
17. Article 35 of the UN Charter states: "Any Member of the United Nations may bring any dispute, or any situation of the nature referred to in Article 34, to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly."
18. Lie, Trygve, "In the Cause of Peace," MacMillan Co, New York, 1954, p.178
19. Lie, ibid, p.327.
20. U Thant, "View from the UN," Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1978, p.155. A State Department official informed U Thant through his military adviser, Indar Jit Rikhye.
21. U Thant, ibid, p.253.
22. Urquart, Brian, "A Life in Peace and War," p.237.
23. Lie, ibid, p.231.
24. U Thant, ibid, p.382.
25. Bourloyannis, Christiane, "Fact-Finding by the Secretary-General of the United Nations", Journal of International Law and Politics, vol. 22(4), Summer 1990, pp.641-669.
26. "Review of United Nations Public Information Networks: Note by the Secretary-General", U.N. Doc. A/44/329, 1989.
27. Furthermore Eisenhower pledged that "the United States is prepared not only to accept United Nations aerial surveillance, but to do everything in its power to contribute to the rapid organization and successful operation of such international surveillance." Documents on Disarmament 1960, "Events incident to the Summit Conference (May 16, 1960)," US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, p.226.
28. Examples of this are ReliefWeb and the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), the first one having been established for the Great Lakes.
29. As of 28 February 1997 Reliefweb (http://www.reliefweb.int) provided information about on-going emergencies and crises in the following states/regions: Afghanistan, Angola, Caucasus

(Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Russian Fed./Chechnya, Great Lakes (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire), Iraq, DPR Korea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan. In addition to these 19 states, there is information on (short-duration) natural disasters.

30. ReliefWeb provided information about on-going emergencies and crises in the following states/regions (as of 28 February 1997): Afghanistan, Angola, Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Russian Fed./Chechnya, Great Lakes (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire), Iraq, DPR Korea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan. In addition to these 19 states, there is information for (short-duration) natural disasters events such as (in February 1997): floods in Bolivia, Mozambique, Malawi; mudslides in Peru; droughts in Ecuador and Kenya; an earthquake in Iran; and a typhoon in Viet Nam.

31. However, a section of ReliefWeb is now being created for West Africa. At present, it only points to other Internet sites. The establishment of an Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) for West Africa, modelled after the IRIN for the Great Lakes, is also being considered.

32. The Hot Line fax number in Geneva, Switzerland is 41-22-917-0092.

33. Mr. Ayala Lasso, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, quoted in UN Doc. DPI/1550/HR of September 1994.

34. The composition of the I&R unit, consisting only of seconded nationals from the permanent five members of the Security Council, does create the potential problem that incoming information may be biased towards the interests of the UN's most powerful states. In practice, however, such natural biases can be taken into account and found acceptable because more information is generally better than less.

35. UN Secretary-General, "50th Anniversary Report on the Work of the Organization", United Nations, 1996 (UN Sales No. E.96.I.19)--see section on "preventive diplomacy and peacemaking", p. 193. DPA was created in March 1992, and officially given responsibilities for preventive diplomacy and peace-making one year later. Prior to that, such functions were performed by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. (See General Assembly resolution A/47/120 for the mandate of the Department of Political Affairs.) A good summary of DPA responsibilities is provided in "DPA overview" ("http://www.un.org/smlogo.gif"):

"The DPA has five main responsibilities in support of preventive action and peacemaking. First, it must monitor, analyze and assess political developments throughout the world. Next, the Department identifies potential or actual conflicts in whose control and resolution the United Nations can play a useful role. It then prepares recommendations to the Secretary-General about appropriate actions in such cases. Fourth, the Department executes the approved policy when it is of a diplomatic nature. Finally, it assists the Secretary-General in carrying out political activities decided by him and/or mandated by the General Assembly and the Security Council in the areas of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping and peace-building, including arms control and disarmament."

36. UN Secretariat, "Department of Political Affairs Overview" at http://www.un.org/smlogo.gif (as of March 1997). Italics added.

37. In fact, the previous Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, wrote in his "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace", submitted to the General Assembly on 3 January 1995, that "in an international bureaucracy interdepartmental cooperation and coordination come even less naturally than they do in a national environment."

38. Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "The DHA/DPA/DPKO Framework for Coordination", DHA, July 1996 (includes flow chart).
39. The IASC was created by the General Assembly in resolution 46/182.
40. "Consultations on Early Warning of New Flows of Refugees and Displaced Persons: Report of the ad hoc Working Group," UN Doc. ACC/1995/24 of 9 November 1995.
41. In Resolution 47/120 of 18 December 1992, the General Assembly "4. Encourages the Secretary-General to continue, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, to bring to the attention of the Security Council, at his discretion, any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security, together with his recommendations thereon."
42. In several resolutions on the "Protection and security of small States", the General Assembly "4. Urges the Secretary-General to pay special attention to monitoring the security situation of small States and to consider making use of the provisions of Article 99 of the Charter. " (Resolutions 44/51 of 8 December 1989, 46/43 of 9 December 1991 and 49/31 of 30 January 1995.)
43. The 1982 Manila "Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes" (approved in resolution 37/10 of 15 November 1982) provides that "6. [t]he Secretary-General should make full use of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations concerning the responsibilities entrusted to him." The 1987 "Declaration on the Enhancement of the Effectiveness of the Principle of Refraining from the Threat or Use of Force in International Relations" (approved in resolution 42/22 of 18 November 1987) states: "31. States should encourage the Secretary-General to exercise fully his functions with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the Charter, including those under Articles 98 and 99, and fully cooperate with him in this respect." The 1988 "Declaration on the Prevention and Removal of Disputes and Situations Which May Threaten International Peace and Security and on the Role of the United Nations in this Field" (approved in resolution 43/51 of 1988) states: "23. The Secretary-General should be encouraged to consider using, at as early a stage as he deems appropriate, the right that is accorded to him under Article 99 of the Charter."
44. The UN Special Commission has also gained much experience from its inspections in Iraq. In Cambodian, the UN peace-keeping force (UNTAC) was given unprecedented powers of inspection (e.g., extending to inspection of files and documents in the offices of the political parties).
45. For a description of the first such body, the Military Information Branch in the Congo operation, see Dorn, A. Walter and Bell, David H., "Intelligence and Peace-keeping: The UN Operation in the Congo 1960-64", International Peacekeeping, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1995, pp.11-33.
46. The Council President stated on 22 February 1995: "The Security Council strongly support's the Secretary-General's conclusion that peace-keeping operations need an effective information capacity, and his intention to address this requirement in future PKOs from the planning stage."

Table 2. UN information sources and their advantages/disadvantages for UN early warning and conflict management.

Information Source	Advantages	Disadvantages
Governments	- UN Member States have a duty to provide UN with information - no financial cost to receive such information - specific information may not be available elsewhere - important to know and understand government policies and assumptions for UN policy development, contingency planning and action	- national bias and self-interest - dominance of Western intelligence capabilities - incomplete and selective info. provided (on a "national interest" and "need to know" basis) - often only analyses are provided without raw data and vice-versa - restrictions may be placed on use and dissemination of information provided (e.g., to avoid compromising intelligence sources)
The Media	- wide-ranging - minimum costs - non-intrusive for UN - usually up-to-date	- media bias; sensationalistic approach - danger that information is factually incorrect (due to rush deadlines and dependence on oral interviews) - Western (US) media dominance
UN Personnel on-site (UN Agencies, Information Centres and verification/peace-keeping missions)	- first-hand observation, physical proximity - generally, more objective than above sources, but usually more cautious - direct communications with locals - possibility of meeting directly with protagonists - permits better targetting of desired information	- may overextend capacity of the UN agencies/centres - may displease host state, which might accuse UN of spying - may compromise other functions (e.g., development work, UN publicity role) - is dependent on consent and cooperation of the host state and local authorities - requires caution to avoid accepting staged events - may be dangerous
NGOs and Individuals (e.g., humanitarian aid organizations)	- generally less biased - inside sources and contacts possible - less sensitive to criticism	- members states may protest to UN (re. role of non-state actors in UN) - danger of lack of professionalism and accountability

Observation technologies (e.g., aerial/satellite and ground-based systems)	- mechanized/computerized systems reduce requirements for on-site personnel and increase efficiency and scope of surveillance - aerial/satellite: possibility for both wide-scan of territory and target-specific information - less intrusive than humans (esp. satellites) - less risk to human life than on-site observers	- expensive, with limited choice of providers (mostly Western nations) - aerial/ground sensors: permission required to enter national airspace or territory (though not for satellites) - susceptible to deception and destruction - aerial/satellite: difficulty to see inside buildings or underground; dependent on weather conditions - regular machine maintenance may be required - need for professional image/information interpretation and analysis

Table 1. The Secretary-General Alerts the Security Council. This table describes the instances in which the Secretary-General (SG) has brought to the attention of the Security Council (SC) new matters which posed a threat to international peace and security. Thus, the Secretary-General exercised the substance of the responsibilities conferred upon him by Article 99 of the UN Charter. However, by a strict application of Article 99, formal invocation of the Article has occurred only three times, arising from the crises in the Congo (1960), Iran (1979) and Lebanon (1989). The table covers the period up to end of the term of Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar (December 1991).

Table 1. The Secretary-General Alerts the Security Council
(see caption in document text)

Secretary-General	*Meeting Date*	*Situation*	*Description*
Trygve Lie (1946-53)	25 Jun 1950	North Korea attacks South Korea. USA notifies SG of attack. SG obtains independent confirmation and details of attack from the UN Commission on Korea.	At an emergency SC meeting, requested by the US (and boycotted by the former Soviet Union), SG speaks first, stating that "military actions have been undertaken by North Korean forces" which were a "direct violation" of General Assembly resolution 293 (IV) and of the *UN Charter*. He said that the situation was "a threat to international peace ... I consider it the clear duty of the SC to take steps necessary to re-establish peace in that area." SC passes resolutions condemning attack as breach of the peace. On 27 June, SC calls upon UN Members to furnish assistance to repel the attack. [Lie, pp. 323-33]
Dag Hammarskjöld (1953-61)	7 Sep 1959	Laos alleges Vietnamese aggression and requests SG to send an emergency UN force.	SG asks SC President to "convene urgently" a SC meeting, which President does under his own authority. USA desires to introduce a draft resolution to establish a fact-finding body as a procedural matter, and thus avoid Soviet veto. At meeting, SG states he is not invoking *Article 99*, which would cause matter to be considered substantial, but is only reporting to SC on agenda item introduced by SC President. He states that he has insufficient knowledge to make judgement as to the facts. US Draft resolution is carried, over Soviet objections, and fact-finding Committee is established. Committee reports indicate that Lao allegations are over stated. No UN force is sent. [UNYB 1959, pp. 62-65]
	13 Jul 1960	Congolese government cables SG with a request for UN military assistance to protect against Belgian parstroops. These had been dispatched to protect Belgian interests (including inhabitants) in the former colony. The country is in chaos.	SG requests urgent meeting of the SC for that evening on "a matter which, in my opinion, may threaten international peace and security." At meeting, he recommends a UN force be sent to Congo, so that Belgian forces could be withdrawn and to prevent other countries (esp. former Soviet Union) from sending troops. SC authorizes him to send the UN force. UNOC, which at its peak numbers about 20,000 troops, is established to help keep law and order. [Cordier & Foote, vol. V, pp. 16-27; UN Doc. S/4381; S/PV.873]
	22 Jul 1961	Fighting intensifies around Bizerta, Tunisia, between French forces (which occupy the city) and Tunisian soldiers and civilians. Tunisia had blockaded the French naval base at Bizerta.	At the second SC meeting dealing with the Bizerta question, SG speaks to SC: "News reaching us from Tunisia indicates that the serious and threatening development which the Council took up for consideration yesterday continues, with risks of irreparable damage to international peace and security." In view of the "obligations of the Secretary-General acting under *Article 99*", he appeals to SC to make an immediate call for cease-fire and return of all armed forces to original positions. SC adopts a resolution with these provisions by vote of 10-0, with France refusing to participate. [Cordier & Foote, vol. V, pp. 526-530]
U Thant (1962-71)	29 Apr 1963	The Imam of Yemen is deposed in a *coup d'état* by republicans. The UAR recognizes new regime, while Saudi Arabia supports the Imam. Fighting breaks out. UAR sends troops.	SG informs SC of his initiatives to ensure against "any development in the situation which might threaten the peace in the area." Explains that the three parties have agreed to the stationing of a UN observer mission (UNYOM) and will pay for it. UNYOM is established to observe disengagement and withdrawal of foreign forces, including supervision of a demilitarized zone. At 11 June 1963 meeting Thant warns that "disengagement may be jeopardized if the United Nations observation personnel are not on the spot." SC passed resolution approving observation force, which conducted operations until 4 Sep 1964. [Cordier & Foote, vol. VI, pp. 328-30]

	20 Jul 1971	Awami League declares the independence of East Pakistan in March 1971. Pakistani President Yahya Khan requests army to suppress independence activities, resulting in bloodshed. U Thant maintains almost daily contact with India and Pakistan but refrains from calling SC meeting because both sides consider the conflict an internal matter.	SG distributes a confidential memorandum to SC members, "warning them that the conflict could all too easily expand, erupting the entire subcontinent in fratricidal strife, and that the UN must now attempt to mitigate the tragedy." The memorandum was made public in August. SG describes it as "an implied invocation of *Article 99*." Yet SC does not meet in emergency session until the Indo-Pakistan War begins on 3 December, four months after SGs warning. SC is unable to decide on action. SG confines himself to the humanitarian aspects of the problem, including the organization of international aid for refugees in India. [Thant, p. 423]
Kurt Waldheim (1972-81)	16 Jul 1974	Cyprus crisis is ignited when Greek Cypriot National Guard stage a *coup d'état* on 15 July against President Makarios, who flees from the Island.	SG requests SC President to convene an emergency meeting, in view of the seriousness of the matter in relation to international peace and security and in view of the UN involvement in Cyprus. The permanent representative of Cyprus also requests meeting. SC endorsed continued UN peacekeeping efforts and authorized SG to attempt to mediate the dispute. However, it was only on 20 July, the day of the Turkish intervention that the Security Council passed a resolution calling for a cease-fire. [UNYB 1974, p. 262]
	30 Mar 1976 & 16 Mar 1978	Lebanon	In both cases, SG brings to the attention of the Security Council the gravity of the situation in Lebanon, transmits the communications that he has received, and offers his good offices. [UN Chronicle, Apr 1976 and Apr 1978]
	4 Dec 1979	US Embassy in Tehran is invaded by revolution-ary students on 4 Nov 1979, with support of Iran's new government. On 9 Nov, after consultations, SC President calls for the release of the hostages.	SG writes to SC President on 25 Nov 1979 drawing attention to the continuing crisis and requesting SC meeting, saying that it was his opinion that the crisis posed a threat to international peace and security. SC meets formally on 27 Nov. SG speaks first, calling upon the USA and Iran to exercise maximum restraint. In resolution of 4 Dec SC calls for release of hostages, restoration of diplomatic immunities and authorizes SG to "take all appropriate measures" to implement the resolution. On 31 Dec 1979 he travels to Tehran. The Iranian government paints his visit as a fact-finding mission to examine cruelties of the Shah's regime. SGs four-point proposal is rejected and he returns empty handed. [UNYBV 1979, pp. 307-312; S/13646]
	26 Sep 1980	From mid-May to mid-Sep SG rectifies accusations from both Iran & Iraq, indicating a deteriorating situation. Iraq invades Iran on 22 Sep, beginning the Iran-Iraq war. SG appeals to both parties on 22 & 23 Sep for restraint and a negotiated settlement.	SG states in letter to SC President (25 Sep), that fighting had intensified and that the situation undoubtedly threatened international peace & security. SG suggests SC consultations. Mexico and Norway request formal meeting of SC. At meeting on 26 Sep, SG summarizes developments leading to the meeting. SC adopts resolution 479 (1980) calling for a cease-fire and urging parties to accept mediation or conciliation. [S/14196; UNYB 1980, pp. 312-314]
Javier Pérez de Cuéllar (1982-91)	15 Aug 1989	Fighting in Lebanon escalates especially in and around Beirut. There is danger of even further involvement of outside parties.	In a letter to the SC President, the SG notes that violence in and around Beirut "had escalated to a level unprecedented in fourteen years of conflict." He states his belief that an effective cease-fire is imperative: "in my opinion, the present crisis poses a serious threat to international peace and security. Accordingly, in the exercise of my responsibility under the *Charter* of the United Nations, I ask that the Security Council be convened urgently ..." [S/20789]

References for Table 1

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Table 3. Old Constraints and New Opportunities in Early Warning

	Constraints	Opportunities
Information-Gathering	- questionable accuracy and usual biases of many information sources (e.g., governments, media, NGOs) - on-site presence requires consent of host state - need to avoid undue infringement on internal affairs - threats to safety of observers (e.g., apprehension, physical security) - the "darkest" plans are kept secret - information overload - limited budgets to explore and expand new UN capabilities	- Internet resources increase accessibility, scope and depth of information; less costly, faster retrieval - better observation technologies (e.g., aerial reconnaissance, commercial satellites with resolution better than 5 metres, ground sensors) - new and improved communications technologies (e.g., e-mail) allow more information to be sent faster and easier - computerized databases used for better information storage/management - greater willingness of intelligence agencies to share information with UN
Analysis	- time consuming, mentally intensive - intentions are hard to guess - hazards of predictions: risk of errors (e.g., "crying wolf") and being proven wrong - need to follow leads, and to find corroborating information	- computer forecasting, graphics for visualization - better communications technologies (testing ideas, soliciting views, gaining feedback) - greater willingness of intelligence agencies to share analysis with UN
Dissemination	- risks of breaching confidentiality of sensitive information (e.g., revealing and compromising information providers) - creates pressure, often unwanted, on states to respond to new threats - may cause international embarrassment if no response is forthcoming, i.e., if the prediction becomes reality then UN is seen to have failed at response stage - if preventive action is successful, the accuracy of the predicted threat may be questioned	- new means of dissemination to the public (e.g., through Internet) - new and expanded roles of SG at end of Cold War (e.g., good offices, multidimensional peace-keeping) brings new authority for proactive work, new response, especially possibilities for preventive deployment - Security Council response more likely than during Cold War - greater awareness of need for early warning - opportunity to set a new norm for "regular and systematic" early warning